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ABSTRACT

This document chronicles and evaluates the work of the Adult Education Association of the USA by its Commission on Architecture as the starting point for concern about how the places used for adult education are a part of the learning equation. A critical analysis of this first commission of a national professional organization shows that individual motivation often sustained the work, but that the question has often lost its place in the concerted efforts of adult educators when that individual was no longer championing the cause. The article chronicles the work of the Commission noting the following highlights: (1) acceptance by the Adult Education Association of a $2,000 grant in 1953 to conduct a conference to examine the implications of adult education for school architecture and to disseminate recommendations; (2) two Commission meetings in 1955 at which the Commission developed an outline for a book, "Architecture for Adult Education," and then approved the text, format, and examples; (3) distribution of the book by 1958; and (4) the Commission's last and largest project, the national Conference on Architecture in December 1958. The paper concludes with a brief reference to rebirth of interest in adequate physical facilities and the creation of a new Commission on Planning Adult Learning Systems, Facilities and Environments. (YLB)

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Building for Adult Education: The Commission on Architecture of the Adult Education Association of the USA

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From time to time, questions concerning the impact of the place on learning have been of interest to adult educators. Usually, this interest has been limited to a small handful of individuals who produce some writings but little research. What research that does exist usually takes a qualitative approach and tends to have limited generalization. The work of Hiemstra and Vosko in New York and Fulton in Montana are the most recent attempts to bring to the fore this particular aspect of adult education; however, a look at the history of adult education sheds light on two other unusually productive times. The Adult Education Association of the USA twice gave impetus to this matter: first in its Commission on Architecture and later in its Commission on Adult Learning Systems, Facilities and Environments.

This article will chronicle and evaluate the work of the Adult Education Association of the USA by its Commission on Architecture as the starting point for concern about how the places used for adult education are a part of the learning equation. A critical analysis of this first Commission of a national professional organization will show that individual motivation often sustained the work, but that the question has often lost its place in the concerted efforts of adult educators when that individual was no longer championing the cause. At times, sparks have been ignited, yet the flame never really has been fueled.

In February, 1953, the Adult Education Association of the

USA, Steering Committee of the Executive Committee, accepted a grant of $2,000.00 from the Fund for Adult Education:

> to conduct a cooperative planning meeting of public school administrators, school board members, educational publishers, citizens schools organizations, school building specialists, architects, and adult educators, for the purpose of examining the implications of adult education for school architecture and of devising a strategy for disseminating recommendations to appropriate local people. (Knowles, 1953, 3-4)

Paul Essert was responsible for contacting the American Association of School Administrators so that the Adult Education Association could jointly conduct such a conference. It is important to note that publication was a primary goal of the conference (thus publishers were to participate) yet no funds of the original grant were allocated to cover publishing costs.

On March 13, 1953, Malcolm Knowles wrote Paul Durrie, President of the Adult Education Association, to clarify necessary follow up actions based on the Steering committee meeting. He suggested that the membership of this conference be extended beyond public school administrators and suggested including "representatives of group work agencies who have some responsibility for building plans. There is, for example, an architecture office in the National Council of the Y.M.C.A. I would also think that people interested in university architecture should also be included."(ltr. dtd March 13, 1953). Durrie recommended that Essert contact the appropriate person at the American Association of School Administrators while he would write Robert Blakely of the Fund for Adult Education "to see if

our conception of the way to use this grant is acceptable to them" (ltr. dtd March 17, 1953). Durrie assumed it would be and advised Essert to go ahead immediately with contacting the AASA. Durrie referred to this project as the one on school architecture and much of the original conceptualization was that public schools should be built to accommodate adult education.

Durrie again wrote Essert about "this little grant from the AEA in connection with the architectural project" (ltr. dtd April 6, 1953). Durrie confirmed that Malcolm Knowles had elicited from the AEA an interest "to include divisions for adult education activities in the building of agencies and of public schools" (ltr. dtd April 6, 1952). The tone suggests that Essert may have been concerned about this. Durrie continues to assure Essert that "the greatest good can be accomplished by placing emphasis on the public schools...There might be real value, however, in including on the planning committee that will eventually evolve a few people from other groups as the Association of Land Grant Colleges." (ltr. dtd. April 6, 1952). At the June, 1953, Steering Committee Meeting, Essert was to have given a review of progress on the architectural study; however, he did not attend the meeting. The committee did recommend that the allocation of funds allow for flexibility in the conduct of this study.

The first substantial efforts of this committee came on July 16, 1953, when a special conference was sponsored by the AEA and the AASA. The workshop was held at Teachers College, Columbia University and included representatives of the AEA, ASSA, the

Federal Government, Universities, the YMCA, the American Institute of Architects and other agencies. In a report of the conference prepared on August 3, 1953, it was recognized that there was a general "lack of facilities which may be adapted to adult education purposes" (Essert, p.1);therefore, the participants particularly emphasized that in the public schools there was an acute problem "because in most instances buildings have to be used which were built and equipped for the accommodation of children, rather than adults."(Essert, 1953, p.1). The workshop saw that "the desirable end result is to encourage communities to make much more adequate provision for proper adult education facilities."(Essert, 1953, p.2). The participants proposed a long term comprehensive study conducted in three parts. In order to stimulate awareness of adult education concerns by building planners, it was suggested that a document be produced within a year by

> one man- working with an advisory committee... (which) should show that arrangements for adult education functions may be made in the planning stage of this new construction without a great deal of extra expenses. There should be a considerable amount of descriptive material of new developments in architecture... There should be included an annotated and classified bibliography of what has been published concerning these matters. (Essert, 1953, 4)

It was estimated that this part of the project would cost between $12,500 (if conducted by a doctoral student) and $16,000 (if conducted by a full-time qualified employee).

The second part of this document would portray actual cases of community involvement in planning adult education activities in school building development. From $16,000.00 to $20,000.00 was

suggested (again depending if conducted by a doctoral student or a full time qualified employee) for a committee to suggest possible cases, for visits to the suggested communities, and for the publication of a report. The third part called for "visualizing potentialities of future planning" (Essert, 1953, p.6). A commission would be appointed to use the materials gathered in parts 1 and 2:

> to write a document which might be called "A look at the Future"...This commission of leaders in many areas and fields of endeavor would attempt to show how the solution of problems involving the total community might be facilitated by good building design in the schools. (Essert, 1953, p.6)

A budget of $36,000.00 was developed based on the experiences of those involved with the writing of the AASA Yearbook.

While the three part project dealt with what should be, what had been done and what could be done in the future, the committee was well aware that a suggested budget of $14,000 was being considered by the FAE. So:

> they were unanimous in their decision that any substantial attack upon this problem of planning functional facilities for adult education would cost considerably more than the proposed amount...It was agreed that it would be better to put the total $14,000 grant into the first project which is outlined, than to try to cover the entire plan in a completely inadequate fashion. (Essert, 1953, p.7)

With the $14,000.00 budget, the committee suggested a three year plan-- data gathering and first draft for $7,000 to $10,500; publication for $3,250.00, and
distribution for $3,750.00 depending on the data gathering costs. Based on its funding allocation of only $14,000.00, it is apparent that the FAE did not accept the expanded proposal

developed by the workshop at Teachers College on July 16, 1953. In December, 1953, Knowles confirmed that, "the report has been under study by the AEA executive committee and the FAE staff, and agreement has just been reached in December to create a committee of the AEA to revise the plan to give less emphasis to fact-finding and more emphasis to involving architects and policy-makers in the consideration of the requirements of adult education in the future planning of buildings" (AEA Report to Robert Blakely, p.8).

On January 29, 1954, a report of actions taken on resolutions of The 1953 Delegate Assembly was prepared. This report attributed to Work Group No. 23 led by Howard L. Johnson two resolutions on "providing adequate physical facilities for Adult Education"--the preparation of a handbook and the appointment of a standing committee. Paul Essert was appointed chair of the Committee on Physical Facilities which would prepare the recommended handbook. On April 1, 1954, a report on the progress of AEA Committees indicated that the Physical Facilities Committee was chaired by Essert, with Executive Committee Liaison provided by Sharer and Staff liaison by Olds. The status of the committee was "activity held up pending approval of plans by FAE. Meeting scheduled for spring to revise plans." (p.2). By September 1, 1954, this committee was reported as having met once, and having prepared a proposal which the FAE was considering. At the September 9-11,1954, Executive Committee Meeting, the committee was told that it was expected the FAE

would approve the proposal and "that the project can get underway within the next couple months." (Report, p. 3) It can only be assumed that the FAE and the AEA agreed on the proposal at its $14,000.00 level sometime between Sept 11, 1954 and November 11, 1954 when the Executive Committee agreed to discontinue the Architecture (Physical Facilities) Committee and create the AEA Commission on Architecture chaired by John Becker, an architect from Cincinnati, Ohio.

For the 1954 AEA National Conference a proposed special interest group was to discuss Physical Facilities for Adult Education originally to be led by Paul Essert but later changed to Homer Kempfer. In a report prepared for the Executive Committee on Sept. 2, 1954, by Malcolm Knowles, it was indicated that by August, 1954, Essert had not replied to his invitation to led this group. By October 28, 1954, 295 tear sheets had been returned to the AEA Washington office indicating which special interest meetings were of interest to the participants. Only six individuals had chosen the Physical Facilities group! Thus, the 1954 Program lists no such special interest group meeting!

The 1955 AEA Committees, Commissions and Sections list gives a good indication of the Architecture Committee's relative strength in relation to the other 28--the largest budget to any other committee, commission or section was $700.00. In contrast, the Architecture Commission was funded at $12,500.00; a level roughly 18 to 125 times that of any other!

In 1955 the Executive Committee of the AEA affirmed the

importance of this undertaking in its public relations material. Declaring that "the Executive Committee of the AEA must consider these (proposed projects) with regard to their contributions to the field, the core activities of the organization and available funds." (Special Projects, 1955), there were four special projects listed to include as number 2 "the AEA...is working to encourage the planning of better facilities for adult education in new construction by major sponsoring agencies." (Special Projects, 1955). Perhaps the most revealing document of 1955 was the Operational Plan for the Commission on Architecture. This document gave the Commission two purposes--to identify principles and features that needed more consideration in designing for adult education and the communication of these principles so that they would be applied. These tasks included publishing 2,000 copies of a "basic exposition of features and principles which should receive greater attention in designing school buildings, YMCA's, university or college buildings, libraries, community centers, religious institutions, etc." (Operational Plan). In addition, 10,000 copies of a phamplet were planned "for administrators, board members, civic leaders, etc. to develop awareness of possibilities, solutions, and sketching some of the high lights of the basic document so as to encourage obtaining and using it." (Operational Plan).

Besides these two publications, a slide show for use as an exhibit at conventions, meetings and conferences was envisioned. There was also a call for stimulating articles published in

architectural journals as well as adult education; meetings at national, state, and regional conferences to raise awareness, and meetings of a committee of about 15 to serve as the AEA's Commission on Architecture.

Two Commission meetings were held in 1955. On January 28, 1955, in Washington, D.C., the Commission developed an outline for a book, Architecture for Adult Education. This book was designed for:

> ...audiences interested generally in constructing educational facilities as well as for directors of adult education who will be planning facilities designed exclusively for adult education...Rather than striving for presentation of "ideal" plans, the book aims to present representative examples of existing adult education architecture. (Report to the Fund for Adult Education on Grants made to the Adult Education Association of the USA pp 24-25).

At this January, 1955, meeting responsibility for writing the text and selecting illustrations was given in full to John Becker, the architect chair of the Commission. On August 26, 1955 the Commission met and approved the text, format, and examples selected by Becker. The Progress Report written for the Sept 9-11, 1955, Executive Committee on August 31, 1955, details that the Commission devoted some time to discuss the distribution of this book. While it was agreed that the AEA Publications Committee had responsibility for the distribution and sale of this book, it was suggested that the Commission considered donating up to 1,000 copies (50% of the intended publication) in university and public libraries to insure access to the book. The book was subtitled Building a Bridge between youth and maturity

and was printed by Berman Printing Company in Becker's home city of Cincinnati, Ohio. The book was described in Adult Leadership as:

> A graphically illustrated guide for all those, laymen and technicians, who must plan physical facilities for the education of adults. This handbook, published by the AEA's Commission on Architecture, offers suggestions for making the best use of already existing facilities and proposes plans for new facilities--not only school buildings, but a variety of other types of structures. (1957, 5 (9), 290)

However, the publication of this book was not so joyously announced in the AEA's other publication--Adult Education. This journal was a quarterly intended for "professionals" in the field of adult education and was seen as having a distinctly different readership than Adult Leadership intended for the layman and part-time practitioner of adult education. Adult Education (1957, 5 (4), 253) without any editorial comment simply lists the book as professional literature available for $2.00.

In November, 1957, the Executive Committee met in San Diego, California and considered a request made in the Spring of 1957 by the Commission on Architecture to expend its remaining funds on a conference at Purdue University the following November of 1958. While the original operational plan of 1955 did not include such an activity, this conference would combine many of the original tasks into one more grandiose activity. In May, 1957, the Executive Committee postponed any decision pending a more detailed plan and budget. A special planning group from The Commission on Architecture met on June 28, 1957 and prepared the required document. It was voted to approve the Commission on

Architecture's request to hold this national conference in conjunction with the opening of a new center for adult education at Purdue University. This was to become the Commission's largest and last project! Malcolm Knowles announced that this conference would be held in November, 1958, and would be for "architects, adult educators, and educational policy makers.(Adult Leadership, 1958, 6 (11), 27).

By 1958, the first publication of the Commission--Architecture for Adult Education--had been distributed and was being reviewed by the field. S.T. Ritenour, the Executive Director of the Department of Church Building of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America, wrote a generally favorable letter which appeared in the "talking it over" section of Adult Leadership. However, he was concerned by what he saw as underrepresentation of church architecture in the book. "In view of the very extensive church building period we are now in, I would hope that there could be much more emphasis given to this phase of adult education...You are to be commended for having done what you have..."(1958, 6 (7), 162).

In October, 1958, Herbert Hunsaker, a member of the Commission on Architecture as well as the President elect of the AEA, reported a preliminary conference program and asked the AEA's Executive Committee for its suggestions on invitees. The Conference on Architecture was announced to the field in November, 1958, in a one page Adult Leadership article without an acknowledged author. The conference had been scheduled for

December 3 and 4, 1958, and was open to any "interested persons without fee" (7 (5), 129). The conference was very reflective of the basic commitment of the AEA to represent many organizations and to conduct meetings in a participatory manner. While funding was provided by the AEA and Purdue University, it was claimed that 30 national organizations cooperated in its planning. The theme of the conference was "Creating a Favorable Environment for Adult Education" while its goal was to "bring together several hundred adult educators, architects, institutional administrators, and builders, to explore new ideas about how to provide better physical facilities for the education of adults." (7 (5), 129). True to its perceptions of adult education as an enterprise involving numerous different agencies in America, the planners sought representation from "churches, business and industry, labor organizations, universities, public schools, colleges, libraries,and social welfare and recreational agencies" (7 (5), 129). The development of the Memorial Center at Purdue University funded by the W.H. Kellogg Foundation was a central focus of the planned conference. Not only were the participants to hear about architecture--they would actually see this newest adult education conference facility. The program included discussions of Purdue's philosophy of adult education, a Kellogg presentation on its support for centers for continuing education of adults, a discussion of the unique characteristics of adult learners by Cyril Houle, and a presentation by Malcolm Knowles on a survey conducted prior to the conference on perceptions of the

physical environment by adult educators. The conference included a symposium led by John Becker, chair of the Commission on Architecture, to "present the view of the consumer, the teacher, the administrator, and the architect." (7 (5), 129).

The second day in keeping with the traditional format of AEA national conferences was dedicated to seven special interest groups discussing the question, "How can we do a better job of plant planning for adult education?" (7 (5), 129). At lunch that day, Herbert Hunsaker and Malcolm Knowles would report the summaries of those seven groups. To conclude the conference implications for both architects and educators would be presented by Walter Cocking who was Editor of The School Executive.

This conference was reported in February, 1959; however a promised summary of the conference to appear in the March, 1959, issue of Adult Leadership never came to fruition. Hunsaker and Knowles authored a preliminary report explicitly stating three assumptions motivating the Committee's work. These were:

> 1. There is inadequate understanding by architects and institutional leaders of the physical requirements of adult education.
> 2. There is inadequate knowledge of adult educational theory....
> 3. There is inadequate communication between (sic) architects, educators, agency administrators, and adult education consumers, especially when it comes to joint planning of physical facilities. (7 (8), 241)

The bulk of this preliminary report was devoted to Clark's tabulation of Knowles' pre-conference survey. However, the report also established the three main questions for the conference:

> 1. What are the philosophical concepts of adult education and significant program trends which may influence the

> physical plant and environment for adult learning?
> 2. What does (sic) the educator and the architect need to know about the consumers and users of the physical plant, research and planning, architectural design, and equipment, in order to do a better job of plant planning for adult education?
> 3. What are some of the implications of the conference findings for the future planning of the plant and environment for adult learning? (7 (5), 241)

It was reported that 250 persons participated coming from 17 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada. College and University personnel represented almost 50% of the attendees while 45 public school personnel and 25 architects attended. Also represented were "libraries, business and industry, labor, churches, community centers (including recreation and social work).(7 (8), 242). A published report was promised with funding from the Commission and the Center for the Study of Liberal Education.

The Executive Committee at its March 20-22, 1959, meeting heard a report from Hunsaker about the conference; however, he declared, "the Commission is making no recommendations at this time." (Minutes, Executive Committee Meeting). In May, 1959, Adult Leadership carried a brief report on the conference and stated that a full report was forthcoming. Slightly behind schedule, this full report was made available in December. Advertised in Adult Leadership, the publication was "for school and college administrators and all persons interested in providing a suitable environment for adult education" (8 (6), 191). Such advertising seems to have limited the great variety of individuals with numerous organizational affiliations that were

envisioned in the original planning of the conference. Yet, rather than limit the report of the Purdue Conference to those who would read Adult Leadership as was first indicated by Knowles in the preliminary report, the last hurrah of the Commission on Architecture was the publication of a monograph for much wider dissemination.

Creating a Climate for Adult Learning was advertised both in Adult Leadership and in the more scholarly Adult Education throughout the early 1960's. In 1960, the Commission spent its remaining balance on the publication ($1,800.00) and advertisement ($512.99) of this report. The final chapter of some seven years work appeared in the 1960 Handbook of Adult Education in the USA edited by Malcolm Knowles. Chapter 13 written by John Becker attempted to present the various efforts of the AEA since its February, 1953, decision to accept Fund for Adult Education money to study physical facilities. Becker touted Architecture for Adult Education as the "first effort to treat the subject with discrimination and comprehensiveness..."(1960, 156). In what appears to be consistent overstatement, Becker labeled the Purdue conference of 1958 as " a conference of national scope" (1960, 156) and mentions "a number of related conferences and articles..." (1960, 156). Yet, he only discusses Knowles pre-conference survey while claiming, "those interested in coming to conclusions about architecture for adult education had occasion more than once to circulate questionnaires..."(1960, 156). His own bibliography lists only the two Commission on Architecture

publications.

Perhaps, John Becker was simply not able to accept that his dream of architecture for adult education being " widely acknowledged as the fastest growing movement in American learning." (1960, 156) was not the reality of the 1960's just as it had not been a reality of the 1954 AEA National Conference. During the early 1960's the Commission, now out of funds, simply sold its final product and quietly disappeared.

However, while concern for adequate physical facilities may have faded in the early 1960's, it did not expire. About a decade later, a rebirth of interest led to the creation of a new Commission on Planning Adult Learning Systems, Facilities and Environments. Today, we see a renewed interest in the topic in the writings of Vosko and Hiemstra at Syracuse University and of Fulton at Montana State University. Perhaps it is only coincidence that two architects, Jim and Karen Leed, in Cincinnati, Ohio have recently published a book, Building For Adult Learning.

The question of the importance of place to adult learning quietly stays on the back burners of the American adult education enterprise. When individuals are able or willing to move it to a more prominent place in the literature, there are short lived attempts to address the problem. However, too often the question is left to architects or more recently to environmental psychologists. Long ago, adult educators proclaimed that the methods and materials of elementary, secondary and post-secondary

education were not always appropriate for adults engaged in life-long learning. Another important message is that the places of elementary, secondary and post-secondary education need also to be evaluated, modified and sometimes abandoned if the enterprise of adult education is truly to foster life-long learning.

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